Create account Log in

Article Talk Read Edit View history Search

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Navigation
Main page
Contents
Featured content
Current events
Random article
Donate to Wikipedia
Wikimedia Shop

Interaction
Help
About Wikipedia
Community portal
Recent changes
Contact page

Tools
What links here
Related changes
Upload file
Special pages
Permanent link
Page information
Data item
Cite this page

Print/export
Create a book
Download as PDF
Printable version

Siegfried Bettmann

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Siegfried Bettmann was a bicycle, motorcycle and car manufacturer and initiator of the Triumph Motorcycle Company. In 1914 he established the Annie Bettmann Foundation to help young people start businesses[1] Triumph became one of the most famous motorcycle trade-names of the world.[2]

Siegfried Bettmann	
Born	18 April 1863 Nuremberg, German Confederation
Died	23 September 1951
Residence	Coventry, England U.K.
Nationality	Originally German became British national
Occupation	Motorcycle and car manufacturer
Spouse(s)	Annie Meyrick

Contents

1 Early life
2 Business
3 Later life
4 See also
5 References
6 External links

Early life [edit]

Born in 1863 in Nuremberg, Germany, Siegfried Bettmann moved to England in 1885,[3] and settled in Coventry. He found work with Kelly & Co. compiling foreign directories for their publications. After six months, he obtained a job with the White Sewing Machine Co. as a translator and worked as the company's sales representative in northern Europe. Fluent in several languages, he perfected his English, married a local woman, Annie Meyrick (known as Millie) and became a British national.[1]

Business [edit]

Bettmann founded S. Bettmann & Co and started selling bicycles by the name 'Triumph' from premises in London. In 1886, Bettmann sought a more general name, and the company became known as the Triumph Cycle Company. A year later, the company registered as the New Triumph Co. Ltd., with funding from the Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Company. In that year, Bettmann was joined by another Nuremberg native, an engineer named Moritz (Maurice) Schulte, as a partner. Schulte encouraged Bettmann to transform Triumph into a manufacturing company, and in 1888 Bettmann purchased a site in Coventry using money lent by his and Schulte's families. The company began producing the first Triumph-branded bicycles in 1889. In 1896, Triumph initiated a subsidiary, Orial TWN (Triumph Werke Nuremberg) a German subsidiary for cycle production in his native city.

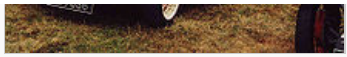
In 1902 the company diversified into making motorcycles at their works in Much Park Street.[4] In 1902 the first Triumph motorcycle was developed. It was a strengthened bicycle with a 2.25 bhp Minerva engine.[3] Once the business grew the purchased engines were replaced with their own and in 1907 the company expanded into a new factory in Priory Street, in premises of a former mill.[4]

1922 Triumph H 1

At the beginning of World War I the War Office called a meeting of Coventry industrialists at St Mary's Hall and asked them to put their resources at the disposal of the military and two weeks after Britain had declared war on Germany, Bettmann received a telephone call from Capt. C. V. Holdsworth of the Army Service Corps, (who later became Triumph's Managing Director) with an order for a hundred Triumph motorcycles for the BEF who were soon to go to France. Despite being a Saturday afternoon, Bettmann and his staff worked non-stop to crate the required motorcycles and by Sunday evening they were delivered to Coventry railway station in time for the evening train.[1] The British Army subsequently placed large orders for the Triumph 550 cc Model H and by 1918 they were Britain's largest motorcycle manufacturer.

In 1921 Bettmann further diversified into car production and bought the Dawson Car Company to produce the Triumph 10/20. In 1927 he developed the Triumph Super 7 which sold well until 1934. In 1930 the company changed its name to the Triumph Motor Company and produced the Triumph Southern Cross and Gloria ranges. In 1936 the company had financial problems however and in 1936 the Triumph bicycle and motorcycle businesses were

both sold. The motorcycle business was bought by Jack Sangster of Ariel Motorcycles to become Triumph Engineering Co Ltd.[4]


Triumph Gloria

Later life [edit]

Siegfried Bettmann's success enabled him to become President of the Coventry Liberal Association. A Freemason and founder member of Coventry's Chamber of Commerce, he was also a Justice of the Peace and in 1913 became Mayor of Coventry, the first non-British subject to have the position.[1]

His German origins resulted in him being removed from this position on the beginning of the First World War.

In 1914 Siegfried Bettmann founded the Annie Bettmann Foundation with his wife to help young Coventry men and women between the ages of eighteen and forty who wished to start a business. Preference was given to ex-servicemen and the fund, which is still in existence, was extended subsequently to include grants for further education.[1] Bettmann also commissioned a memorial for the 66 employees of the Triumph company killed in action during the First World War, built in Coventry's London Road cemetery in 1921.[1]

The Triumph Motorcycle Company became one of the most famous motorcycle marques of the world and Bettmann retained an association with the company until his death.[2] Siegfried Bettmann died on 23 September 1951 at his home "Elm Bank", Stoke Park, Coventry.[5]

See also [edit]

- Triumph Motor Company
- Standard Motor Company

References [edit]

1. ^ a b c d e f "Triumph and Gloria" . Retrieved 2008-10-05.
2. ^ a b "Triumph over adversity" . Retrieved 2008-10-05.
3. ^ a b "About Triumph" . Retrieved 2008-10-05.
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5. ^ Death notice published in *The Times*, 25 September 1951

External links [edit]

- Biography at transport-museum.com
- Biogrpahy at CoventrySquared

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Categories: 1863 births | 1951 deaths | British motorcycle pioneers | British businesspeople | People from Nuremberg | German expatriates in the United Kingdom | British founders of automobile manufacturers | Mayors of Coventry | British Freemasons

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